



Summer Footwear Folly

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Spring has just started, according to the calendar anyway, and I am already starting to see them everywhere. Sockless feet with flip-flops and sandals. Along with the warmer weather and the transition to Summer footwear I will start to see in the clinic foot, ankle and knee problems popping up like weeds in your vegetable garden. Every Summer I see numerous injuries and complaints significantly related to poor footwear, or no footwear at all. No one wants to wear supportive shoes with socks because “my feet get too hot” and to avoid the dreaded sock-tan line.

The way in which your foot contacts the ground at impact while walking affects not only your foot and ankle, but that force gets translated up through the knees to the hips and back. If your feet have good arches that are not too high or too flat, then you most likely have absolutely nothing to worry about. Unfortunately, not many people have “normal” arches. Individuals with low or fallen arches (flat feet) like me are most likely to suffer from wearing unsupportive footwear.

Wearing sandals and flip-flops, or even going barefoot some of the time is not what typically causes problems. Injuries occur because people wear them EVERYWHERE they go. Shopping, long walks, church, run errands, climb Mt. Everest...EVERYWHERE no matter what the conditions unless there is a monsoon. This leads to excessive strain on the foot arch and overuse trauma to the joints of the lower half of the body from the low back on down.

Now don't get me wrong, I like to wear sandals when the weather is nice, too. However, I make it a point to wear sandals with some cushion in them and as much support as you can find in a sandal. Also, if I am going for a long walk, I trade out my sandals for a pair of socks (spend a few bucks extra on the ones that wick moisture away from your feet to keep your feet cooler) and supportive running shoes.

The best thing you can do is LISTEN to your body. If your feet, ankles and/or knees start to ache from going barefoot or wearing your favorite sandals all day long, your body is telling you enough is enough. If you don't listen, your body will continue to speak louder and louder until it is screaming at you. Be kind to your feet and they, in turn, will be kind to you.